

# Ontological categories: On their distinction from transcendentals, modes of being, and logical categories

*Categorías ontológicas: sobre su distinción respecto de transcendentales, modos de ser y categorías lógicas*

JOSEF SEIFERT

Academia Internacional de Filosofía  
Instituto de Filosofía Edith Stein  
18011 Granada (España)  
seifert@institutoifes.es

**Resumen:** The question about how many and which specific categories there are depends on a more essential one: what is the nature of categories? In turn, the answer to this question requires that we clearly distinguish ontological categories from transcendentals, modes of being, and logical and linguistic categories. After drawing these distinctions, the author outlines a response to the question about the number of categories.

**Palabras clave:** Logical categories, ontological categories, transcendentals, modes (or modalities) of being.

**Abstract:** La cuestión de cuántas categorías hay y cuáles son depende de otra más esencial, la de saber cuál es la naturaleza de las categorías. A su vez, la respuesta a esta cuestión exige distinguir con claridad las categorías ontológicas de los transcendentales, de los modos de ser y de las categorías lógicas y las lingüísticas. Solo tras haber trazado estas distinciones, el autor esboza una respuesta a la pregunta de cuál es el número de las categorías.

**Keywords:** Categorías lógicas, categorías ontológicas, transcendentales, modos (o modalidades) de ser.

RECIBIDO: OCTUBRE DE 2013 / ACEPTADO: ABRIL DE 2014

ANUARIO FILOSÓFICO 47/2 (2014) 315-356  
ISSN: 0065-5215

315

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:  
A REALIST PHENOMENOLOGICAL VERSUS A “NEUTRALIST”  
METAPHYSICS OF CATEGORIES

The questions what ontological categories are and which points of view and methods should be applied to determine their nature are far from being easy to answer; and even more difficult is a reply to the query how many and which specific categories there are, a question that is impossible to solve before one has reached clarity about what ontological categories are and what they are not.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we shall turn to the question of a list of categories only at the end of this essay, approaching this topic only briefly.

In order to achieve clarity about our subject, we will first investigate ontological categories by means of distinguishing them from transcendentals, from modes of being, as well as from logical, linguistic and other categories that are often confused with them. Most lists of categories not only contain a fusion of ontological with logical and linguistic categories, but also mix ontological categories with transcendentals and modes of being that will be shown to be entirely different data.<sup>2</sup> In order to identify

- 
1. For a brief and informative account of the complexities and difficulties of the problem of categories and a historical overview of their discussion from Aristotle to the present, see A. THOMASSON, *Categories*, in EDWARD N. ZALTA (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition) URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/categories/>>2013. This helpful entry, however, also lacks the distinctions through which we hope to contribute to a philosophy of categories in this article.
  2. One might show this in detail regarding the lists of categories of R. CHISHOLM, *A Realistic Theory of Categories* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), who includes various modes of being among his list of categories, or R. GROSSMANN, *The Categorical Structure of the World* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983), who mixes together, like Kant, logical categories (such as negations and quantifiers) with ontological categories (such as relations and facts). The same could be shown about J. HOFFMAN and G. ROSENKRANTZ, *Substance Among Other Categories* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994), whose list of categories mixes together ontological categories with logical ones, with transcendentals (transcendental “entity” as such), as well as with modes of being, which we hope to show to be entirely different things. The same applies to E. J. LOWE, *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation, Identity and the Logic of*

ontological categories, and to contribute possibly towards the goal of a complete list of them, we have therefore to distinguish them sharply from logical categories, transcendentals, modes of being and other non-categorical data.

The present study of categories is based on the presupposition (which cannot be clarified here but is open to philosophical knowledge) that an ontology of categories—in the proper sense of “ontology”—cannot and must not be “neutral”, neither in the sense of leaving it open whether we deal with ontological, logical, or linguistic entities, nor in the sense that our investigation would leave it open whether the ontological categories metaphysics studies are subjective or objective, rooted in the nature of things or

---

*Sortal Terms* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1989) and *The Four-Category Ontology: A Metaphysical Foundation for Natural Science* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2006), who on the one hand takes categories to be ontological categories describing them in terms of “what kinds of things can exist and coexist”, but on the other hand mixes modes of being and transcendentals in his list. His description is in both respects quite insufficient. For the definition of category given by him would cover even the *infima species*, and thus kinds of things which are rather the opposite of ontological categories, namely not the highest kinds which are never species of more general genera, but the lowest kinds which can only be species and not genera of subordinated classes of things; on the other hand, he includes in his list transcendentals which, precisely by being present in all categories, entirely transcend categories and are not themselves categories. G. RYLE, *The Concept of Mind* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1949) and *Categories*, in *Collected Essays*, Volume II: Collected Essays 1929-1968 (Hutchinson, London, 1971) 170-184, does not speak directly of categories of entities, but rather of differing logical types of concepts. J. CUMPA, *Categoriality: Three Disputes Over the Structure of the World*, in J. CUMPA and E. TEGTMEIER (eds.), *Ontological Categories* (Ontos-Verlag, Frankfurt, 2011) 15-65, and *Sobre la expresión. Ensayo sobre las categorías de la noche y del anochecer*, “Kriterion: Revista de Filosofía” 127 (2013) 227-245, claims that “all classification of entities is ontological” which is a doubtful claim even though he adds that not all classification is categorial. Just consider purely logical and linguistic classifications which are not ontological in the widest sense. Even not all classifications of entities can be called “ontological”. For example a biologists’ classification of 2000 kinds of beetles is not to be called “ontological”. Solely if fundamentally different kinds of being are classified in a way that considers their different distance to nothingness and their fundamental and most general kind of being, and only when the point of view of such a classification is deep enough and does not consider accidental properties of a set or group to allow for a “categorization”, can a classification be called “ontological”. For example, the class of all men who wear black hats is not a genus, nor a species, let alone a category.

constructs of the human mind or of language, or are nothing but words used in certain combinations with other words.<sup>3</sup>

These are two entirely different meanings of “neutrality”, of which the first, in a way that evaporates metaphysics properly speaking, fails to elaborate the fundamentally different data of ontological, logical, and other categories, while the second leads to an abandonment of metaphysics and entails various contradictions, especially in Gracia’s version. The present essay, by distinguishing ontological and logical categories from modes of being and transcendentals, is largely, though only implicitly, dedicated to overcoming the first sense of “neutralism”. Therefore, my objections to this kind of ontological “neutrality” do not need to be stated at this point. Hence, let me turn here only to a brief consideration of the second meaning of the “neutrality-approach” to the problem of categories, and to some of the reasons why I am critical of it:

Gracia, the chief exponent of a “neutral ontology of categories”, states<sup>4</sup> that his essay on metaphysics is neutral: “with respect to the question whether they [the categories] are linguistic, conceptual, or real in the sense that they are categories of each sort but not all are categories of one sort”.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the author, as does Copi in his *Symbolic Logic*, repeatedly prides himself of having written a book acceptable to *all* metaphysicians regardless of whether they are realists, idealists, conceptualists, nominalists, etc., or even deny the possibility of metaphysics. Such a claim, however, is fraught with many unsurmountable difficulties and lends itself immediately to three critical objections:

(a) In the first place, it leads to many contradictions to other parts and actually to the major tenets of the book, for example to the author’s critique of metaphysical nominalism, conceptualism, and

---

3. J. E. GRACIA, *Metaphysics and Its Task. The Search for the Categorical Foundation of Knowledge* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999) defends such a “neutral ontology”. For a critical investigation of this view of such a double “neutrality” of an ontology of categories, see J. SEIFERT, *What is Metaphysics and What Its Tasks? An attempt to Answer this Question with Critical Reflections on Gracia’s Book*, in R. A. DELFINO (ed.), *What are We to Understand Gracia to Mean? Realist Challenges to Metaphysical Neutralism* (Rodopi, Amsterdam/New York, 2006) 21–45.

4. J. E. GRACIA, *Metaphysics and Its Task* cit.

5. *Ibid.*, p. xvii. See also *ibid.*, p. 134.

realism, in which precisely these and many other positions about categories that had first been declared compatible with the treatise, are rejected as untenable, contradictory, reductionistic, and in other ways wrong.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding his harsh critique of the mentioned positions, and immediately after having criticized them as false and reductionist, the author declares them as compatible with a “neutral” standpoint in the second sense of the term.<sup>7</sup>

(b) The “neutrality” of Gracia’s theory of categories (to which he reduces metaphysics) inevitably leads to contradictions by treating mutually exclusive standpoints and positions that are precisely incompatible with his “neutral” metaphysics as if they were compatible with each other. For example, to understand ontological categories as the most universal and highest essential genera of entities is incompatible with the assertion that they are just words or that they are whatever “can be predicated of other terms or expressions”.<sup>8</sup> For no ontological category is just a word and most ontological categories cannot be predicated of terms and expressions at all.

(c) The “neutrality” of the position in both senses of the term leads to an evaporation of any philosophically and metaphysically significant *content* of the notion “category”. Let us assume that categories are nothing but words and ways in which these are used. Then precisely metaphysics and metaphysical categories do not exist (even though also this nominalism and the resulting negation of metaphysics remains contradictory in presupposing some understanding of being). Hence a neutrality that prescind from all these differences leads to a philosophical obliteration of the field “metaphysics”, just as Copi’s prescinding from the question whether logical laws are objective, subjective, ontologically founded, or just linguistic, leads not to a pure philosophical science of logic but to a potential negation of what logic really is about, or at least to a total abstracting from what constitutes the most fundamental question of *philosophical* logic, namely what logical entities such as concepts,

---

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-205.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 205: “This means that the very notion of category should be understood to be neutral with respect to whether categories are extramental kinds of entities, concepts, or words”.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

propositions, and logical laws are and wherein their necessity and that of all laws of valid inferences are rooted and consist in.

In sharp contrast to such a double “neutrality”, our analysis seeks to elucidate the true nature of the fundamental datum of ontological categories. (There is a third and very good sense of neutrality present in Gracia’s position that is, however, only misleadingly called “neutrality”).<sup>9</sup>

The following investigation, while claiming the character of an original philosophical investigation for itself, may simultaneously be understood as part of a large number of original philosophical works on categories throughout two and a half millennia, and as an invitation to other thinkers to engage in further investigations along the realist phenomenological and content-full (non-formal and non-neutral) way of studying ontological categories proposed in this essay.

As to the question of the originality of the present study, I wish to remark first that I believe that in philosophy truth holds an absolute priority over originality, such that any theory or statement that is true, even if it has been made a thousand times before, is of far higher value than strikingly original but false theories, which do

---

9. This meaning of “neutrality” is expressed by J. E. GRACIA, *Metaphysics and Its Task* cit., 206 in the following way: “Hence, whether a particular category is a linguistic, mental, or extramental kind of entity, should not be determined before an investigation of the category is carried out...” In such passages “neutrality” is no longer defined in terms of an *epoché* regarding the question of whether a category is mental or extramental, but as an *openness-of-mind* to investigate *each category* in its own terms and only then to decide the question *whether* it is just subjective or objective, mental or extramental, etc. But this sense of “neutrality” should be better called a striving for adequacy, *differentiation* or “comprehensiveness” of a metaphysical position. The assertion that metaphysics needs to be “neutral” in this sense is a very good point indeed that requires, however, a rejection of both of the other senses of neutrality and consists in a differentiated and unredutionistic account of *each kind* of category in its own nature. It recognizes *all of the categories* (ontological, conceptual, linguistic, etc.) and distinguishes each in its own identity and difference. It also requires overcoming of what Gracia sees as a onesided explanation and an absolutization of *some categories* or of *some difficulties* of the single conceptions of categories he carefully expounds. (J. E. GRACIA, *Metaphysics and Its Task* cit., 182 ff.) In other words, he wishes to recognize both transcendent and immanent, ontological and conceptual, etc. categories and the characteristics of each, and thus overcome a position that seeks to explain the whole variety of phenomena termed “categories” in the light of just one of these. And this needs to be done by a comprehensive metaphysical study.

not only lack that same value of truth but possess, to the degree of their falsity, a great philosophical disvalue. In this spirit, my essay wants to find what is true about ontological categories, regardless of whether Aristotle or Duns Scotus, or hundred other minds have said the same before or not.

Secondly, the important originality of a philosophical work consists primarily in the degree to which the philosopher gains a contact of his own with those realities and “things themselves” which he is treating, instead of just presenting thoughts of other philosophers without having or even seeking any contact of his own with the things affirmed by them.<sup>10</sup> In this sense I hope that there is not one single thought in this essay that is not original.

Thirdly, inasmuch as one arrives at new distinctions in philosophy, it is mostly the case that at closer examination the Salomonic wisdom of the Old Testament “nil sub sole novum” (Ecclesiastes 1:10) applies: most everything true that one can see and say has been seen or stated in one way or another before by some great or small thinker (and unfortunately also almost every error and sophistry has been formulated before by some preceding sophist). Nevertheless, in the light of this third criterion of “originality”, I would say that I do not know any single book or article in which the ontological categories are more sharply distinguished from transcendentals, from modes of being, from logical and other categories than in this essay, which allows it to make some claim to originality in the third sense of the term. This relates this article also positively to my own previous work on the subject.<sup>11</sup>

---

10. See J. SEIFERT, *Texts and Things*, “Annual ACPA Proceedings” LXXII (1999) 41-68.

11. In none of my main books on metaphysics —J. SEIFERT, *Essence and Existence. A New Foundation of Classical Metaphysics on the Basis of ‘Phenomenological Realism,’ and a Critical Investigation of ‘Existentialist Thomism’*, “Aletheia” I (1977) 17-157 and 371-459.; *Sein und Wesen* (Universitätsverlag C. Winter, Heidelberg, 1996); *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica* (Vita e Pensiero Milano, 1989); *Gott als Gottesbeweis. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments* (Universitätsverlag C. Winter, Heidelberg, 2000)—, nor in numerous essays on ontological questions, I have ever before drawn out with equal clarity the distinction between categories and transcendentals, nor that between categories and the different modes of being.

## ONTOLOGICAL CATEGORIES AND WHAT THEY ARE NOT

Ontological categories are the most universal “genera” of being, i.e. the most basic distinct kinds and classes of entities, such as “substance”, “quantity”, “quality” and the like. The distinguishing mark of categories is not their universality as such, because each general essence, including that of purple and red of a certain shade, or of “dusk”, has the characteristics of abstractness, universality, and “dominion” over potentially infinitely many individuals, but their character of first or “*highest genera*” of being, which cannot be regarded as species of another, higher genus of being. Porphyry expresses this clearly when he says that the category (*generalissimum*, highest genus) is that “quod, cum genus est, non est species”,<sup>12</sup> i.e. a category is a (highest) genus of being that cannot be considered as a species of a higher genus. He expresses the same state of affairs by saying (again in Boethius’ translation) “supra quod non est alius supraveniens genus” (higher than which there is no further genus).

From this understanding of an ontological category as “highest kind of being”, which we owe to Aristotle,<sup>13</sup> and which no doubt

- 
12. PORPHYRY, *Isagoge*. Texto griego, trans. Boethii, introd., trad., notas, apéndices y bibliografía de J.J. García Norro y Rogelio Rovira (Anthropos, Madrid, 2003), 17.
  13. Aristotle, besides discussing the most important ones of them (from a distinctively ontological point of view) extensively in his *Metaphysics*, particularly in Books V 7, 1017 a 22 ff., VII, IX, and XI, introduces the ontological categories also in his logical work *The Categories*, without distinguishing therein clearly *logical categories*, *semantic categories* (meanings of uncomposed words), and ontological categories. See also Giovanni Reale’s comments in his commentary on Aristotle’s metaphysics and on Plotinus’s critique of the Aristotelian categories: G. REALE, *Aristotele: Metafisica*. Saggio introduttivo, testo greco con traduzione a fronte e commentario, 3 vol. (Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1993), 213; PLOTINO, *Enneadi*. Traduzione di Roberto Radici. Saggio introduttivo, prefazione e noti di commento di Giovanni Reale (Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milano, 2002), 1411 ff. Nevertheless, also in the *Categories* Aristotle may be said to treat (even mainly, or at least very prominently) ontological categories, both in his minimal list of the fourfold distinction related to “predicable (not predicable) of” and “being(not being)-in” and in his maximal list of ten categories. See ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, in J. BARNES (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols. transl. J. L. Ackrill (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995) 3–24. For the reason of this ambiguity there have been presented different titles for his *Categories* and big controversies broke out over the question whether the *Categories* were a work of ontology (to be titled “the genera of being”, a title proposed by some but rejected by Porphyry), of logic, as Porphyry suggests: PORPHYRY, *Isagoge* cit.;



corresponds to a most basic datum, regardless of the name we give it, it follows that a number of important objects of metaphysics that are frequently confused with categories fall outside their realm:

### 1. *Categories are not “Transcendentals”*

In the first place, the investigation of a being and properties possessed by *all categories of being*, and of principles of being which apply to all beings of any category, is prior to, or at any rate falls outside of, the study of ontological categories. For in dealing with being or with *entia* as such, we precisely do not deal with the most fundamental *different* genera of being, the categories, but with something that “unites them” all, that is common to them all, applies to them all, without itself being a genus, and is thus prior to categorial distinctions.

Metaphysics has usually spoken of being as such, inasmuch as it is found in all things and categories, and of the first principles of being, as “transcendent” (to all categories, categorial differences of things and limitations) or as “transcendental”, following the use of the term in medieval philosophy.

This sense of “transcendental” is entirely based on a realist understanding of being and therefore sharply distinct from the Kantian sense of “transcendental”, which aims at an opposite to the transcendent: namely at immanent forms of perception and thought, the origins of which would lie in the subject and simultaneously in a

---

*Isagoge*. Testo griego a fronte. Pref., intrud., traduzione e apparati di Giuseppe Girgenti. In appendice versione latina di Severino Boezio (Bompiani, Milano, 2004), or of grammar or semantics that deals just with word-meanings. Girgenti (*op. cit.*, 26-34) quotes a number of passages in the *Isagoge* in which it becomes clear that Porphyry understands the categories of Aristotle not only as logical, but also as ontological categories. C. EVANGELIOU, *Aristotle's Categories & Porphyry* (E.J. Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln, 1996) 19 ff., 23-32, reports in detail about this controversy which spans from ancient philosophy to the present. Plotinus (*Enn.* VI, 1-3), a great critic of the Aristotelian division of 10 categories, adhered clearly to the ontological interpretation of them (C. EVANGELIOU, *op. cit.*, 94 ff.). However, Plotinus 1) denies categories that could both cover the sensible and the intelligible world, except in terms of equivocation (homonymy); 2) drastically reduces their number to five for the intelligible, and five for the sensible world, holding that some of Aristotle's categories can be reduced to others on his list.

sphere that would be found, at least in its origin, completely outside of any experience and of the world of appearances.<sup>14</sup>

The notion of transcendental used in the following does therefore not only disagree with “metaphysical neutrality”, but is also radically opposed to any subjectivization of the transcendental realm and of categories, which I have criticized sharply and repeatedly, in the spirit of some prominent realist phenomenologists of the Göttingen and Munich schools, and with many reasons.<sup>15</sup> In

---

14. According to this Kantian understanding of the “transcendental” of the a priori forms of sense-intuition and thought, the latter (the categories and principles of understanding) would not apply to being in itself and to its most fundamental distinctions and classes, a sphere allegedly closed to our knowledge, but things would just be perceived through our subjective forms of intuition of space and time, and be thought through our subjective forms of thought that Kant identifies with the categories and principles based thereupon. These transcendental subjective categories and principles of understanding, engendered by and in the subject, and merely applied to, or projected into, the objects of human experience (the appearances) would not allow us any theoretical cognitive access to things in themselves, to being and essence as they are in themselves. And when human reason leaves the entire field of immediate experience, such as in thinking of God, soul, or world, the situation of the human intellect would still be far worse. For then the human mind would, according to this Kantian view, construct transcendental ideas which cannot be applied to any object of experience. Man, inasmuch as he has to conceive of them as real in themselves with a kind of subjective necessity of thinking that compels him to conceive of world, soul, and God as real in themselves, would inevitably fall prey to a transcendental illusion, from which only the recognition of their origin in the subject can (partially) cure him. See I. KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Norman K. Smith (Macmillan and St Martin's Press, Toronto/New York, 1929, 1965), “transcendental aesthetics”, “transcendental logic”, “transcendental dialectics”. How Kant seeks to bridge the divorce between human subjectivity and the world of things in themselves through his *Critique of Practical Reason* and why such a Kantian bridging and escape from the immanentism of his conception of categories fails is beyond the scope of this essay.

15. See especially the work of two fathers of phenomenological realism: A. REINACH, *Concerning Phenomenology*, in R. N. BECK (ed.) *Perspectives in Philosophy* (Holt, Reinhart, & Winston, New York, 1969), *Über Phänomenologie*, in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Ausgabe mit Kommentar*, Bd. I: *Die Werke*, Teil I: *Kritische Neuauflage (1905-1914)*, Teil II: *Nachgelassene Texte (1906-1917)*, pp. 531-550; D. VON HILDEBRAND, *What is Philosophy?* 3rd edn, with a New Introductory Essay by Josef Seifert (Routledge, London, 1991), *Che cos'è la filosofia?/What Is Philosophy?* (Bonpiani, Milano, 2001). See also J. SEIFERT, *Essence and Existence* cit., *Back to Things in Themselves. A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism* (Routledge, London, 1987), and *Vissza a magánvaló dolgokhoz*. Translated and introduced by Mátyás Szalay (Kairosz Kiadó, Budapest, 2013). The latter constitutes a new version of *Back to Things in Themselves* that represents the most

the following, I shall attempt to unfold the objective essence of the ontological categories, i.e., of the most fundamental different kinds of being.<sup>16</sup>

In our sense, closely related to that of the term in medieval philosophy, the term “transcendental” refers chiefly to three things:

1. TO BEING AS SUCH, as it is common to beings of all categories; this being is *eo ipso* indefinable because it has no higher genus above it and therefore cannot be defined in terms of its specific difference from such a (non-existent) higher genus. Moreover, transcendental being is not itself a highest genus nor a category of being,<sup>17</sup> because it is “open” to all modes, categories, kinds, and species of beings and is in them all in a merely analogous way that contradicts its being itself a highest “genus”, “being as such”, of which, for example the color “red”, “man” and “God” would be species.<sup>18</sup> Transcendental “being” cannot exist at all as such except in a being of a certain essence, i.e., in a being that belongs to a

---

definitive and considerably enlarged edition of the work. Especially the section on the realist phenomenological cogito is further elaborated and enlarged by a detailed analysis and critique of Kant’s charge (put forward in the “Paralogism of Pure Reason” of the Critique of Pure Reason) that the Cogito argument is built on an equivocation of the *ego cogitans* once understood as object thought through the subjective categories, and then as subject of consciousness. See the masterful work of R. VERA GONZÁLEZ, *Crítica a la ontología y gnoseología del yo en Paul Natorp desde la perspectiva de la fenomenología realista* (2010, published electronically on <http://eprints.ucm.es/10062/1/T31456.pdf>); see also J. SEIFERT, *Überwindung des Skandals der reinen Vernunft. Die Widerspruchsfreiheit der Wirklichkeit – trotz Kant* (Karl Alber, Freiburg/München, 2001), *Superación del escándalo de la razón pura. La ausencia de contradicción de la realidad, a pesar de Kant* (Ediciones Cristianidad, Madrid, 2007), *Sein und Wesen* cit., *Essere e persona* cit.

16. See on such an understanding of ontological categories, besides ARISTOTLE, *The Categories/On Interpretation*, translated by H. P. Cooke (William Heinemann Ltd., London / Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1973), G. REALE, *op. cit.*, F. BRENTANO, *op. cit.*, J. SEIFERT, *Essere e persona* cit., ch. 5-9.
17. Aristotle noted this in *Metaphysics* 998b23, 1059b31, but many later thinkers confuse it, for example R. CHISHOLM, *A Realistic Theory of Categories* cit., who includes the transcendental *ens* (“entia”) among his list of categories, as the highest thereof. Something similar applies to many other thinkers, for example to the list of categories in J. HOFFMAN and G. ROSENKRANTZ, *op. cit.*, who mix together ontological categories with transcendentals as well as to E. J. LOWE, *The Four-Category Ontology* cit.
18. See J. SEIFERT, *Essere e persona* cit., ch. 7.

certain category and has a nature and essence above and beyond just “being”.<sup>19</sup>

At least all finite beings also belong to a most universal class and genus of being, which is what the term category means, but being as transcendental is not such a class. Moreover, transcendental being is entailed in all genera and species of being: in life-less and in living substances, in colors and tones, in all species and subspecies of animals and plants, in human persons, angels, in fictional objects represented in literature, and in all other entities of any category and modality even if none of these actualizes the full potential and perfection of “transcendental being”, except the absolute, divine being, God. Thus, transcendental being is not any genus of being. Any attempt to regard it as a concrete entity: (transcendental) “being as such”, and to treat it as if it were a supreme genus of being (a category), as well as any attempt to hypostasize this “transcendental being”, will lead to some form of identifying it with nothingness (because in isolation it would be nothing), or, in a more confused

---

19. A detailed analysis of this fact I have offered in J. SEIFERT, *Sein und Wesen* cit., and in J. SEIFERT, *Esse, Essence, and Infinity: a Dialogue with Existential Thomism*, “The New Scholasticism” LVIII (1984), 84-98. I cannot here embark on a careful investigation of a very different sense of “transcendental” Duns Scotus has investigated, who sees the most important feature of the transcendental in its character of a pure perfection, i.e. a perfection which to possess is absolutely better than not to possess it and which therefore, in their perfect form, exist in God. These transcendental pure perfections include all classical ones, as those mentioned above, but also include some categories (for example substance), but not all (for example not characteristics of time and space). In addition, these pure perfections include many characteristics which are neither found in beings of all categories nor in beings of a certain category as such: for example life (there are non-living substances), personhood (there are impersonal plants and animals), knowledge, wisdom, justice, and love, all of which are exclusively found in persons, and all exclusively divine perfections such as omniscience, necessary real existence, aseity, etc. See A. WOLTER, *The Transcendentals and their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure, New York, 1946). I have investigated this sense of transcendentality and the notion of pure perfections extensively in J. SEIFERT, *Essere e persona* cit., ch. 5; *Gott als Gottesbeweis* cit., J. SEIFERT, *Essere Persona Come Perfezione Pura. Il Beato Duns Scoto e una nuova metafisica personalistica*, in *De Homine* (Herder/Università Lateranense, Roma, 1994) 57-75, *Erkenntnis des Vollkommenen. Wege der Vernunft zu Gott* (Lepanto Verlag, Bonn, 2010), *Back to Things in Themselves* cit.

thought, with a pantheistically conceived God.<sup>20</sup> Transcendental being can only be in some categorial form or in the perfect form of an absolutely infinite being but never in isolation, for itself; it neither is a category nor a highest genus.

Of course, the extreme abstractness of the categories and their analogous form of being in different spheres of being also excludes thinking that “substance” is a genus of which a stone, a fly, man, and God would be species. In this respect, we could say, with Cajetan, that a category is not a genus that has fundamentally the same content in all beings but an “analogous universal” and an *analogous genus* (an *analogon*).<sup>21</sup> If we speak of it univocally, this has to be understood purely logically in the sense of radically abstracting logical concepts, not ontologically nor in the sense of logical-linguistic univocity of those specific terms that reflect the fundamentally different kinds of being in their meaning.<sup>22</sup>

2. SECONDLY, THE TERM “TRANSCENDENTAL” LIKEWISE APPLIES TO THE TRANSCENDENTAL PROPERTIES, i.e. to properties that characterize all things regardless of their categorial form and essence. In these transcendental properties all things participate and have some share, at least in a minimal degree of perfection. Such “transcenden-

---

20. As we find done in Hegel's *Logic* in the dialectics of being and nothingness, in which “pure being” is held both to be identical with nothingness and the opposite of it. Hegel believes that all becoming can be explained through such a dialectical relation between being and nothing, because, alone and for itself, it cannot be and thus would be nothing indeed. See the superb critique of the equivocations contained in Hegelian dialectics in W. BECKER, *Idealistische und materialistische Dialektik. Das Verhältnis von 'Herrschaft' und 'Knechtschaft' bei Hegel und Marx* 2nd ed. (Kohlhammer, Berlin-Köln-Mainz, 1972). See also J. SEIFERT, *Überwindung des Skandals der reinen Vernunft* cit., *Superación del escándalo de la razón pura* cit.

21. CAJETAN (TOMMASO DE VIO), *De nominum analogia*, in *Scripta philosophica*, 6 Bände; herausgegeben von P. Zammit, M.-H. Laurent und J. Coquelle (Institutum Angelicum, Romae, 1934-1939).

22. I have tried to reconcile the Scotist thesis that the concepts that refer to pure perfections, transcendentals, and categories, are “univocally used”, with the position of Aquinas that (ontologically speaking) there can be only analogy between finite and infinite beings and substances. See J. SEIFERT, *Essere e persona* cit., ch. 7.

tal properties” characterize entities of all categories and have been designated, for example, as the following seven:<sup>23</sup>

1. *Ens* (or “a being”: *id quod est*) that possesses being (*esse*) (a being that is *ising*, as Wilhelmsen expresses himself).<sup>24</sup> Being as the “to be” or existing, *esse*, does not coincide with the entity, the *ens*, that possesses *esse*. Nor does it coincide with the latter’s essence (*res*).

2. *res* (essence), the *what* and *how* a being is; there is some kind of trinity between *ens*, *esse*, and *essentia*, so that the first two transcendentals include actually three: besides that which is (*ens*) also its essence (*res*, *essentia*) and its *esse* (existence).<sup>25</sup>

3. It is likewise a transcendental property of each thing that each and every entity is *aliquid* —something as opposed to nothing, *non nihil*; each being as well must have a proper identity of its own, and hence is distinct from everything else: it is an *aliud quid* (something else). Moreover,

4. Each being is *unum* (one) —some kind of unity that is a united whole of moments and elements and is also one in virtue of the kind to which it belongs, as well as in virtue of its individual thisness; all this makes each being to be a certain, however weak, unity, a “one”. Each being of any category is also:

5. A *verum* (intelligible);

6. A *bonum* (good, bearer of some value); and

---

23. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, in *Opera Omnia* (ut sunt in indice thomistico additis 61 scriptis ex aliis medii aevi auctoribus) 7 Bde, ed. Roberto Busa S. J. (Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1980) vol. III, 1-186, q. 1. Following Thomas and Thomists such as Gredt, transcendentals have been studied in a deeply phenomenological way by E. STEIN, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinne des Seins*, in *Edith Steins Werke*, Bd. II, 3rd ed. (Herder, Freiburg, 1986). I have developed some of these investigations further in J. SEIFERT, *Essence and Existence* cit., *Sein und Wesen* cit., *Essere e persona* cit., ch. 5-7.

24. See F. D. WILHELMSSEN, *The Paradoxical Structure of Existence* (University of Dallas Press, Irving, 1970).

25. These very difficult questions I have treated extensively in J. SEIFERT, *Essence and Existence* cit., *Sein und Wesen* cit., ch. 1 and 2. See also J. HERING, *Bemerkungen über das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee*, 2. Aufl. (Reihe, Darmstadt, 1968), H. SPIEGELBERG, *Über das Wesen der Idee. Eine ontologische Untersuchung*, “Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung” XI (1930) 1-238; R. INGARDEN, *Essentiale Fragen*, “Jahrbuch für Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Forschung” VII (1924) 125-304, *Über das Wesen*. Hrsg. von Peter McCormick (Universitätsverlag Winter, Heidelberg, 2007).

7. A *pulchrum* (beautiful, i.e., possessing some kind of meta-physical or aesthetic beauty).

Duns Scotus has revolutionized the philosophy of these transcendentals, calling “transcendental” not only and not primarily what is common to all things of all categories but calling “transcendental” any pure perfection (1) which to possess or to be is absolutely better than anything incompatible with it. Such pure perfections are (2) not essentially limited to a finite form or category and hence can be infinite and therefore be in God. (3) All these pure perfections must also be compatible with all others, which follows logically from their first and foremost characteristic (1). We can identify four groups of these transcendental properties of being in Scotus’s understanding of which the transcendentals in the common sense discussed above is only one group:

a. The mentioned transcendentals which are common to every being and therefore must also be in the infinite being;

b. Pure perfections that exist only in some beings in the world (such as life, intellect, justice) but likewise “can be infinite in something” and are only fully themselves in their infinite form;

c. Exclusively divine perfections that exist only in God such as absolute infinity of goodness, necessary real existence etc.

d. What Duns Scotus calls the “disjunctive transcendentals”, i.e. that each being must be or have one side of an infinite series of pairs of contradictory opposites.<sup>26</sup>

3. “TRANSCENDENTAL” ARE, THIRDLY, THE FIRST PRINCIPLES, i.e., states of affairs or “laws” which apply to all things of any category, such as:

(1) *the ontological principle of identity* which refers to the state of affairs and law that every being of any category and kind is identical with itself, thus having a unique relationship to itself: “it’s being itself”, which is closely related to the transcendental property “*aliquid*”, not in its sense of *non nihil* (not nothing), but in its sense of *aliud quid* (of being something distinct from other things and not being something else).

---

26. See A. WOLTER, *op. cit.*, and J. SEIFERT, *Essere e persona cit.*, ch. 5.



(2) the *principle of (non-)contradiction in the ontological sense*, according to which nothing can be and not be at the same time and in the same sense, in relation to the same, etc.; nothing can have a property and not have it in the same sense, or at the same time, etc., and no state of affairs can coexist with its contradictorily opposite state of affairs.

This ontological principle of (non-)contradiction is quite different from, and irreducible to, both the principle of identity and the third transcendental principle of being:

(3) *The principle of excluded middle in the ontological sense* consists in that it is impossible for anything *neither to be nor not to be* in the same determinate sense. This principle does not require the time-restriction of the principles of identity and contradiction because something either is or is not and there is no third possibility at all times and at any different time; different times allow for the (non-simultaneous) lack of total identity as well as for the realization of contradictory states of affairs. Things can have, at different times, a predicate P and not P, a fact that is the condition of the possibility of every becoming. But neither at the same nor at different times can an X *neither be nor not be*.<sup>27</sup>

(4) Among the first transcendental ontological principles that transcend all categorial genera of being is also a fourth one, *the principle of sufficient reason* that consists in the necessary state of

---

27. The problem of how this principle seems to be contradicted by fictional objects, as for example when we say that the witch in Grimm's fairy tale Hänsel and Gretel neither has red hair nor not red hair, can be solved once we understand the infinitely many "indeterminacy spots" in represented fictional objects that are never completely determined (determinate) by the imagination of an artist, in contrast to the real world that has no such "indeterminacy spots", at least not in the present and past. In fictional objects, however, there are infinitely many indeterminate aspects of which it is true to say that the imaginary and indeterminate S neither is P nor not P. Roman Ingarden has shown this masterfully in his R. INGARDEN, *The Literary Work of Art*. Transl. by George G. Grabowicz (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973), and in his R. INGARDEN, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt*. Bd. I. Existentialontologie. Bd. II, 1, Formalontologie, 1. Teil (Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1964-1965). Aristotle argues in his *Peri Hermeneias* (*De Interpretatione*) that also the future is intrinsically indeterminate and therefore there is no present or past truth about future contingents. See C. W. A. WHITAKER, *Aristotle's De Interpretatione: Contradiction and Dialectic* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996).



affairs that there always must be some reason, within or outside anything, why it is rather than not being, and why it is the way it is and none other. Also this principle, which must be sharply distinguished from the thesis that this sufficient reason must be a necessary reason (a claim Leibniz makes), is a first and “transcendental” principle of all being in the sense that nothing, absolutely nothing, can exist without a reason that may lie within it or outside of it. This is evidently true, even though the concrete nature of such a reason may be extremely different in different things: ranging from strictly necessary reasons to completely arbitrary and whimsical decisions of free agents which are sufficient to explain why some senseless actions occur.

Also efficient causes are part of the sufficient reason. And yet, the principle of sufficient reason is much wider than the principle of causality; for the latter *by no means* refers to every being, but only to every change and contingent being, requiring an efficient cause of it. The notion of reason is not only wider than that of efficient cause, however, but is also much wider than a notion of cause that includes all four Aristotelian and additional personal causes not discussed by Aristotle: it not only includes also final causes, material causes, formal and exemplary causes, but many further causes and reasons why something is. For example the reason (formal cause) of a mathematical state of affairs, or the reasons why an absolute being exists, are quite different from the four Aristotelian and other personal causes, even though some philosophers might be inclined to say that any reason that lies within the nature and essence of a being is a case of “formal causality”. If the notion of “formal cause” includes all reasons that lie within the essence of a thing, or in the necessary connection between essence and existence in the absolute being, many further reasons may be called “formal causes”. This does not apply, however, to all further reasons. For instance, the character of “formal causality” must not be attributed to the causality by which an agent brings forth his own free actions.<sup>28</sup> On the level of persons, in cognition, logical reasoning, motives for human

---

28. See further explanations in J. SEIFERT, *In Defense of Free Will: A Critique of Benjamin Libet*, “Review of Metaphysics” LXV/2 (2011) 377-407.

actions and attitudes, we find many further reasons and causes that cannot be subsumed under any of the Aristotelian four or other causes that do not necessarily entail persons.<sup>29</sup>

The four first ontological principles are states of affairs and in a sense “necessary laws” that apply to everything that is regardless of the category or mode of being within which it falls. As such they are not identical with the propositions which state them (let alone with the sentences that express these propositions) but with the objects of these propositions (*Sätze*) that affirm these first principles but are not identical with them. The first ontological principles themselves are not sentences or propositions but ontological laws or states of affairs which possess necessity in themselves and at the same time are necessary laws for all modes and categories of being and for each individual thing.

## 2. *Categories are not Modes (Modalities) of Being in the strict sense*

### A. What are “modes of being”?

Besides categories there is another and even more primary division within being that is, I suggest, clearly prior to categories, namely the “modes of being”, especially the following five ones:

1. Real being.
2. Ideal being.
3. Purely logical being such as concepts and propositions.
4. Purely intentional being (for example, fictional objects and objectivities represented in literary works of art).
5. Possible being and possible worlds which are not absolutely nothing as can be seen when we consider their opposite: impossible worlds.<sup>30</sup>

29. See J. SEIFERT, *Persons and Causes: Beyond Aristotle*, “Journal of East-West Thought” 3/2 (2012) 1-32.

30. R. INGARDEN, *Der Streit um die Existenz der Welt* cit., distinguishes only four modes of being (3 of which coincide with ours) and also calls them categories: the real (spatio-temporal being), the ideal (abstract), the absolute (completely independent, atemporal), and purely intentional (consciousness-dependent). R. GROSSMANN, *op. cit.*, rejects modes of being entirely (pp. 5-10).

In this section, I wish to show that not only the “transcendentals” but likewise what we could call the five modes of being and the ontological modes of the states of affairs that we find in relation to these modes of being, fall beyond the categories. Modalities of being such as reality-possibility-necessity-contingency can be found in, and affect, all categories of being and hence cannot be considered categories themselves. In his list of twelve categories, larger and different from Aristotle’s ten, Kant includes some of these modes of being (namely 1: *reality*, and 5: *possibility*)<sup>31</sup> among his categories, without noticing clearly the very different kinds of things he calls, at this point, categories.<sup>32</sup>

For while the modes of being characterize vast spheres of infinitely many “inhabitants”, just as vast or even vaster than categories, they differ from the categories in the following ways:

B. The first mode of being: categories can and must be attributed primarily to real being, whether it be sensible or spiritual, whereas there are many other modes of being to which variations of the same, and some new categories apply.

Thus this primary mode of being, reality, is in no way on the same level as the categories which find themselves *within it*. If one calls this primary mode of being, the real world, a category, one changes

---

31. These belong to Kant’s three —with their opposites six— “modal categories”: possibility-impossibility; existence-non-existence; necessity-contingency, as well as to the first of the three qualitative categories: *reality*; *negation*, *limitation*.

32. Besides, Kant criticizes Aristotle’s list sharply because he regards them as an unsystematic and accidental classification without a unified principle, and also claims that the list sins against the correct one both through excess and through defect. R. ROVIRA, *¿Una lista desordenada y defectuosa? Consideraciones sobre la crítica de Kant al elenco aristotélico de las categorías*, “Anuario filosófico” XXXIX/3 (2006) 747-767. has offered an excellent and thoughtful critique that shows that both objections of Kant rest in part on a lack of understanding Aristotle correctly (ignoring the four distinctions and the principles that underlie his list of categories and have been explained in different ways by ancient, medieval, and renaissance commentators). Rovira likewise shows that Kant introduces and rejects some categories and addresses his “objection of excess and defect” to Aristotle on the basis of a subjective idealism that was wholly foreign to Aristotle.

the notion of category in the direction of a more comprehensive concept of categories the content of which loses through this enlargement of its extension the specificity of the content of the term “categories”. While the categories of being find their most characteristic and primary realization within the first mode of being: real being, *real being itself is not a category such as substance*, for example.

Within the real world of oceans and mountains, plants, animals and persons, colors, movements, and sounds, we find beings of all categories such that their “being real” must be designated as their mode of being, but not as a category. For, while differing from other modalities of being (possible, fictional, ideal and conceptual ones), the ontic mode (modality) of real being is more foundational than the categories: it is not itself a genus of beings or entities, however, but as it were contains innumerable entities of all categories within itself, yet in a different sense of “containing” than for example space and time contain things.

A. Besides, while the proper understanding of many categories of being requires that we understand them (for example substances) to be the highest genera of *real beings*, nevertheless it is true that different categories of being are also found in other modes of being, for example there are also substances and persons, as well as qualities and actions in novels, though these are not truly substances and persons but merely imagined or represented ones. Nevertheless, also these purely intentional and fictional beings fall under different categories. For example, Don Quixote is a substance, the pale color of his face is not. There are also ideal essences of man as well as of virtues. There are likewise possible substances, possible persons, possible actions, etc. in possible worlds which are *toto coelo* different from the corresponding real beings in virtue of that unique inner *actuality if real existence: the actus essendi*.<sup>33</sup>

---

33. On the unique interior act of being see J. SEIFERT, *Sein und Wesen* cit., ch. 2. While possible worlds come close to being nothing, they, let alone ideal essences, are not absolutely nothing. Fictional worlds (purely intentional objects) and logical entities are even less nothing. In this respect I have considerable differences with the masterwork of Millán-Puelles: A. MILLÁN-PUELLES, *Teoría del objeto puro* (Rialp, Madrid, 1990), *The Theory of the Pure Object*, transl. by Jorge García-

B. Several categories can, in some sense, be attributed to entities of different modes of being, for example to real, fictional and possible worlds. Thus the modal worlds themselves (in the sense of 2A) are, in one sense, a more foundational division within being than the categories; for they affect and change the “same categories” in a most radical way (for example being responsible for the abysmal difference between real and possible substances, causes, crimes, and persons). On the other hand, as modal categories (in the sense 2B) that both cut across and are found *within* each of the modally different worlds, they are in a sense more universal than the different modes of being because they are not confined to one of them.

C. By constituting *fundamentally different spheres* of being, the modes of being or modal worlds (in the sense 2A) clearly differ from transcendental being and from the transcendental properties of being per se, which do not only apply to all categories but also to all modes of being. (There are, however, important distinctions in this regard and in the application of the first transcendental ontological principles when we come to the world of “purely intentional objects”). The distinct modes of being could rather be regarded as a more fundamentally different and simultaneously more abstract sort of division within being than the categories. Some of the same “ontological categories” are encountered (though radically distinctly) in all modes of being such that the modes of being do not themselves constitute new classes or highest genera of being, and hence are not categories.

Inasmuch as the subject-matter of general ontology and metaphysics comprises what is common and prior to all categorial distinctions (namely the transcendental being, properties and principles, as well as the modes of being), it certainly does not coincide

---

Gómez (Universitätsverlag C. Winter, Heidelberg, 1995). See J. SEIFERT, *Preface* to A. MILLÁN-PUELLES, *The Theory of the Pure Object* cit., 1-12; *El papel de las irrealidades para los principios de contradicción y de razón suficiente*, in J. A. IBÁÑEZ-MARTÍN (coord.), *Realidad e irrealidad. Estudios en homenaje al Profesor Antonio Millán-Puelles* (Rialp, Madrid, 2001), 119-152; *Wahrheit und Person. Vom Wesen der Seinswahrheit, Erkenntniswahrheit und Urteilswahrheit. De veritate – Über die Wahrheit* Bd. I (Ontos-Verlag, Frankfurt / Paris / Ebikon / Lancaster / New Brunswick, 2009).

with the categories but includes themes of an even more foundational significance.

One should then distinguish categories as highest genera of beings (primarily of beings found in the real world), such as the ten Aristotelian categories and some other ones, from *modal categories* (in the second sense of 2B), that are not categories strictly speaking. But if one wanted, by way of enlarging the notion of category, to add all modal ontological categories towards a maximal list of categories, these would include many more, for example temporal modalities such as future, past and present being, and negative modalities such as impossibility, irreality, etc.

D. If one were to accept a list of categories that include also modal categories and are found (differentiated) by the modes of being, one ought to distinguish at least two kinds of modal ontological categories:

a. The primary modes or modalities of being constitute whole worlds of ontologically speaking radically different spheres of being such as the five just mentioned above: for example the real world, possible worlds, and the world of purely intentional objects (fictions, etc.), of which we are just explaining why they ought not be called categories. Within each of these modes of being, however, the different categories take on quite different senses, between which there are such big dissimilarities that for example between a substance in the real world and an ideal (intelligible) (abstract or secondary) substance there is only analogy or even homonymy, as Plotinus has affirmed. Neither one of the modes of being is a category in our sense because they are not highest genera of being; (possible worlds are even closer to nothingness than to being).

b. One could likewise call modal ontological categories those modal characteristics that do not depend on whole modal realms or worlds (such as the real world, fictional, possible worlds, etc.), but constitute different modalities within one and the same modal world. In this second sense, one may apply modal categories to entities or states of affairs within one and the same fundamental modality of being. For example within the real world one could distinguish contingent from necessary beings, real possibilities and potentialities from the corresponding actualities.

### C. The Second Mode of being

Within the second mode of being, the ideal beings and the world of eternal “essences” or “ideas”, the situation is again quite different and far more complicated: for here we find, when we reflect more carefully on that part of ideal being that we call the “ideal essences” or purely ideal essential forms of real beings, categories in an ontic mode entirely different from categories and essences as they constitute the most general categorial structures or forms of *real entities* and essences. We come to recognize that ideal categories (ideal “essences”) neither are nor actually possess the essences of the categories of which they are ideas. They are much rather “ideas” or “essential plans” for essences and categories, while these themselves (co-)constitute a very general layer of the essences and reality of real beings. Ideal essences and categories do also not *mean*, as concepts do, the essences and categories as they exist in real things, nor are they mere *entia rationis*, as concepts may be conceived to be:<sup>34</sup> ideal essences and categories are not meaning-units formed by the intellect in order to refer to essences and categories in thought; they are much rather “models”, plans or archetypes, often (especially in the ethical sphere) far more sublime and noble ones than the essences of and in real beings that exist in the real contingent world; they are “essential reasons (plans)” *for* the essences of those real entities, material or spiritual things, that exemplify or embody these ideas. The ideal essences and ideal (intelligible) categories themselves have their own ideal being, but at the same time they are geared towards the real world that constitutes the primary mode of their being and realization. Ideal “essences” and “categories” are not an empty duplication of the world but a most important eternal archetype and exemplary cause of it.<sup>35</sup>

---

34. I express myself carefully here because I have argued that the thesis of the creation and constitution of conceptual meanings defended by A. PFÄNDER, *Logik* 4th ed. (Universitätsverlag Carl Winter, Heildelberg, 2000) is questionable. See J. SEIFERT, *Is the Existence of Truth dependent upon Man?*, “Review of Metaphysics” 35 (1982) 461–482, *Wahrheit und Person* cit., ch. 4 and 5.

35. Putting these terms in quotation marks follows a suggestion I made in my detailed analysis of ideal versus real essences in J. SEIFERT, *Essence and Existence* cit., ch. 1; *Sein und Wesen* cit., ch. 1.

Now we have here to distinguish certainly “categories as ideas” from categories in and of real entities. For example the ontological category of substance (or what substance really is) cannot exist in its proper reality and essence as universal essence and idea, but only in and of individual beings that embody and exemplify the essence of substance. On the other hand, this common nature of a substance, for example as “essential plan” of man, certainly exists independently of whether it is concretely embodied, perfectly or imperfectly, in real substances (real men). Categories as ideas do not exist *in* concrete entities, as their real essences or more precisely as the categorial layers or strata of their essences in them do. They are not essences in and of things, but precisely the “ideas” of these essences and categories. Now we can see that of any universal including categories, at least if they are “of something”, it is true that they exist only in those things that have this essence. Thus the “category” of substance does not have actual being in the idea of substance, but dwells only in the real and individual beings of which the idea (ideal essence) of substance is an idea.

In this regard, and in spite of the deep difference of *ideas* from concepts and other logical entities such as propositions, the way in which the “categories” are represented in the world of ideas is somewhat similar to the way in which concepts refer to ontological categories without possessing these themselves.

#### D. The Third Mode of Being (“purely logical being”), the Difference between logical and Ontological Categories, and three kinds of “Logical Categories”

Distinct from ontological categories as most general *kinds of being* are the logical categories. *The purely conceptual-logical being of concepts, propositions, etc.* does not fall under the same ontological categories of being which are the highest genera of real beings and are echoed by fictional and possible beings. Logical meaning-unities are not substances, qualities, etc. They are of three entirely different kinds:



### *I. Praedicabilia*

All that can be predicated of a thing (the *praedicabilia*) could be called logical categories; in that sense, for example, accidents can be predicated of the substances that have them, and—in another sense—the famous *deutera ousía* (substance taken abstractly) can be predicated of all concrete substances; for example we can say that this ox is a substance, whereas the first substance (*prote ousía*), namely this individual ox, cannot be predicated of anything else. Logical categories in the sense of *praedicabilia*, however, are rather ontological categories taken as individual accidents or as general nature of the ontological category of substance, and then both can indeed be predicated of individual substances. One might say that these are ontological categories (or individual accidents of a given category) understood *as they are meant* and predicated via logical concepts and propositions.

### *II. Classes of concepts and word-meanings that mean ontological categories: Derivative logical categories distinct only in virtue of the ontological categories they mean*

Concepts and word-meanings cannot be predicated of any real being. We can mean (with Aristotle, though he does not sharply distinguish them from ontological categories of being) “logical categories” to be the *concepts* which *mean ontological categories* without instantiating them: the *logical categories of substance-concepts, quality-concepts, quantity-concepts*, for example, *are not* substances, quantities, qualities, etc., but the *logical categories* that *correspond to* these ontological categories. They are the classes of meaning-units and concepts which *mean these ontological categories*, without being them; concepts neither contain nor are subject to these different ontological categories; for example substance-concepts are not themselves in any sense of the term substances (in contradistinction to possible and fictional beings which are—albeit in an entirely different mode— substances, persons, or accidents: for example Don Quixote in Cervantes’ novel is a personal substance, Rozinante a horse, i.e., an animal substance, the noise in the tavern or the color of the hair and face of Maritorne, are neither one of those, but pure accidents).

As concepts, their *being* would not be categorically differentiated but basically be of the same kind: meaning-units; and in no way could we attribute to them the marks that characterize beings of the different ontological categories meant by them: substance-concepts, for example, are not substances, action-concepts are not actions, etc. Thus this their first categorial difference, *as logical categories*, would stem entirely from their conceptual meaning-intentions being directed at different ontological categories; these different conceptual meaning-intentions characterize them *as concepts* (as logically different meaning-units) and are correlated to ontological categories, but do not render the concepts themselves ontologically different.

### *III. Distinct Logical categories qua logical entities*

Thirdly, there are properly logical categories which are not derived from ontological categories meant by concepts, but which belong to the sphere of concepts and other logical entities as such; these are quite different from the discussed ontological categories but equally different from the second kind of logical categories (and their difference that is purely derived from their objects). The term “logical category” here refers to concepts not inasmuch as they are different in terms of the objects they mean but inasmuch as they are different qua concepts. The difference from the second kind of logical categories is particularly clear when we consider that some of these logical categories of concepts characterize concepts that do not mean any object but are, as Pfänder puts it, *purely functional concepts*, such as the copula in its multiple function of (always) relating a predicate to a subject, while exerting many other kinds of functions (such as *affirming*, *asking*, *wishing* and other functions) leading to different objective logical thoughts or “categories of thought”: judgments, questions, wishes, etc.

If we consider the first genera of elements of objective thoughts and logical *entia*, we could call the following things logical categories, i.e., the highest genera of logical entities:

A. *Concepts* or, as most general category of logical entities, and, as sub-categories: Fundamentally different classes (categories) of concepts such as

- a. substantive concepts,
- b. adjectival concepts,
- c. verbal or action-concepts,
- d. purely functional concepts such as the copula, etc.<sup>36</sup>

B. *Propositions* (i.e., higher and more complex conceptual formations and objective “thoughts”) in the wider sense (that do not coincide with judgments but comprise them as one of their species); and as sub-categories: the different meaning structures of different objective thoughts and complex logical meaning-structures, determined by the different functions of the copula in them: questions, wishes, commands, judgments (which are bearers of the entirety of the truth of judgments<sup>37</sup>), etc.

C. *Reasonings* (*inferences, arguments*) which possess such attributes as validity or invalidity, soundness or unsoundness, etc., and as sub-categories, for example:

Deductive reasonings (syllogisms) and inductive inferences; and of the former further sub-categories such as categorical, hypothetical and disjunctive syllogisms, and their subdivisions and mixed forms.

E. The Fourth mode of being: that of purely  
intentional objects, such as Don Quixote and Sancho Pansa,  
Odysseus or Hamlet

With this fourth mode of being the situation is again quite different with respect to categories. For here substances and all other categories of being do appear: there are substances and accidents, persons and animals, living and life-less things, white-haired and black-haired women, etc. in novels and dramas; but all of these occur in

---

36. A. PFÄNDER, *Logik* 4th ed. (Universitätsverlag Carl Winter, Heidelberg, 2000), *Logic*, transl. from the third unaltered edition by Donald Ferrari (Ontos-Verlag, Frankfurt / Paris / Ebikon / Lancaster / New Brunswick, 2009) has studied profoundly these different logical categories or highest genera of logical meanings (logical entities).

37. See J. SEIFERT, *Is the Existence of Truth dependent upon Man?* cit., *Wahrheit und Person* cit., ch. 4-5.

the world of fiction, in a *King Lear* or an *Odyssey*, in a purely *irreal mode and sense*, i.e., as *purely intentional objects of something that would solely in the real world actually be what in the fictional world it merely “pretends to be”* or is “represented to be”. In a way similar to the fictional “things” also the fictional states of affairs (“the-being-[or not-being]-y-of-an-X”) that are part of the world of “represented objectivities” of a novel or drama are present in the fictional world just as in the real world —and yet: through their radical dependence on conscious intentional acts the fictional states of affairs undergo a profound ontological change that depends on the different mode of being to which they belong. When compared to states of affairs that belong to the real world, they are like pure nothings and yet, once constituted by conscious acts or by the meaning-units that are part of a literary work of art, they are something, which is obvious when we consider that there are true and false judgments about Don Quixote or *King Lear* and on the events that take place in them.<sup>38</sup>

From the fictional states of affairs that are only purely intentional objects of acts of Cervantes, Shakespeare or of their readers, and also from the “objectified intentional objects” and states of affairs of the sort Ingarden described so well in his theory of the “stratum of represented objectivities” in *The Literary Work of Art*,<sup>39</sup> we must distinguish the real states of affairs regarding the fictional world, for example the states of affairs that exist regarding each character and event and chapter of a literary work of art and that are entirely real states of affairs *about* fiction.

---

38. This is of course, at least in a traditional orthodox reading of them, quite different in literary and simultaneously historical works such as the books *Esther*, *Tobias*, or *Job* of the Old Testament, and again different in parables which, while not describing real judges, prodigal sons, fathers, owners of vineyards, kings, etc., but which have such a direct message for the real world that we can in no way treat them as “pure fiction”. Even when pure fiction reaches a certain depth, one might with good reason deny that it is “pure fiction” or that the represented objectivities in a literary work of art are purely intentional objects without direct relation and assertions about the real world.

39. R. INGARDEN, *The Literary Work of Art* cit., J. SEIFERT, *Ingarden’s Theory of the Quasi-Judgment. An exposition of Its Logical Aspects and a Critical Evaluation of Its Value in the Context of Understanding the Literary Work of Art*, in A. WĘGRZECKI (ed.), *Roman Ingarden a filozofia naszego czasu* (Polskie Towarzystwo Filozoficzne, Kraków, 1995).

When we think of these real states of affairs *about* fictional works and the omnipresence of states of affairs in all inhabitants of all five modalities, regarding all possible, conceptual, etc. objects, we might subsume these states of affairs or this omnipresent characteristic of the states of affairs to the transcendental level, and regard “states of affairs” likewise as a “transcendental”. Inasmuch as they are present in all modes and categories of being and also include all negative states of affairs of the non-being of something, states of affairs possess a similar type of “transcendental” universality of “being present in all things, all modes of being and categories”, and hence being themselves prior to all modes and genera of beings.

On the other hand, inasmuch as states of affairs are as it were part of the worlds that correspond to the five modes of being, they assume themselves the different character of the respective mode of being, for example there are *fictional states of affairs* that appear in the literary work and partake in the irreality of the fictional world. There are also real states of affairs, however, many of which come to be and pass away in time and participate in the actuality of the real world. There are likewise states of affairs that are meant by logical meaning-units such as quasi-judgments<sup>40</sup> and are, as it were, “projected by them”, and these projected states of affairs take part (though in a very different way from the ideal, fictional and real states of affairs) in the mode of purely logical entities, of a being of which they are in a certain way, being their object, also part. Here we must distinguish the states of affairs that are meant by logical propositions and reasonings but are *real*, *fictional*, or *ideal* states of affairs, and purely logical states of affairs that entail logical entities and concepts as members and are parts of logic. For example, the logical principle of contradiction is a law that refers to the logical meaning-units of two contradictory propositions and excludes that both be true. On the other hand, the state of affairs projected and affirmed by the proposition “the sun is hot” is not any logical law or state of affairs. The concepts contained in this proposition and the proposition as a whole do not speak *about* logical entities; on the contrary, the subject and predicate to which

---

40. On this term see R. INGARDEN, *The Literary Work of Art* cit.; see also J. SEIFERT, *Ingarden's Theory of the Quasi-judgment* cit.

the subject-concept and predicate-concept of this proposition direct their meaning-intentions, and the corresponding states of affairs themselves to which this and similar propositions refer, may be part of the fictional, possible, or real world but are in no way of logical nature or belong to the sphere of logical entities or laws such as the laws of valid and invalid syllogisms.

#### F. The fifth mode of Being: Possibilities and Possible worlds

We have already touched this issue from several points of view but cannot and need not, in this limited essay, deepen the topic and the transformation categories of possible world objects undergo. I just wish to stress again that there are not only infinitely many true but also false statements about possible objects and possible worlds (for example declaring what is really, or just what is logically, possible “impossible,” or on the contrary, declaring what is objectively impossible “possible.”)

Already this single fact shows that possibilities are something and not nothing and have a certain autonomy with respect to our knowledge and judgment. This applies even to possible worlds much more than to fictional objects and worlds.

#### 3. *Lower Genera of Beings and Individuals are not Categories*

Now one could think that only the most abstract and universal transcendental properties, first principles and the less abstract modes of being (that still exceed the level of abstractness of the categories) fall outside the realm of the categories, but this is not so.

On the contrary, there is another, in a sense a reverse, contrast to the categories, namely lower genera of being and individuals.

*A. No lower genera and species of beings that are not the most general and highest ones are categories*, for example:

1. Color (which is a kind of the higher category of quality);
2. Red;
3. Bordeaux-red, and
4. All infinitely many nuances of the color red;
5. Individual red spots.

None of them and innumerable others are categories in the rigorous sense of the term. Thus, apart from the higher and highest levels of universality of the transcendentals and modes of being, there are the innumerable lower levels of universals and kinds of being that differ from categories. Thus it is already a question whether such general essences as “living beings” (life) or “personal beings” (persons), or “consciousness” are categories, but certainly the genera of “mammals”, “reptiles”, “birds”, etc. are not categories, i.e., they are not in any sense the most universal genera of being. These essences, let alone lower ones, for example that of a specific shade of red, falling under more general essences such as light red, and even more general essences such as redness as such, the latter falling under color, are not highest kinds and hence no ontological categories. We might be tempted to call color as such a category under which all the distinct colors and color shades fall. But “color”, while being the highest genus within that fundamental datum (*urphenomenon*) called by that word “color”, can only be called a “category” if we change that notion.<sup>41</sup> For we understand that color is an accident, and a specific accident of a special kind (quality); and hence not a *highest genus*. There are, in the strict sense, no higher genera of which the categories would be subdivisions. They are precisely the most general kinds of beings. Therefore no species of a higher genus of being is a category.

A phenomenologist might contend that each irreducible general *urphenomenon*, at least the highest genus of it (in our case color), is a category inasmuch as it cannot be derived from some higher genus by adding a “specific difference”. Color cannot be derived from “quality” in virtue of a specific difference, precisely because it is an ultimate irreducible *urphenomenon* that is not the result of combining other data.

Nonetheless, “color” is not a category properly speaking; for it still belongs to a more universal class of being: it is a quality and hence not a category in the strict sense. For the *highest genera* of beings are precisely not species of higher genera; and it is precisely their charac-

---

41. This applies even much more if such things as “night” and “dusk” (getting dark) are called categories, as by J. CUMPA, *Sobre la expresión* cit.

ter of being themselves the *highest* genera of being that entitles us to give to those distinct data a special name: namely that of “categories”.

This does not forbid us to introduce another, less rigorous notion of category.

Some metaphysicians want to call also the mentioned data categories. There is no reason that would absolutely forbid enlarging the list of ontological categories in order to achieve a maximal extension of the term (far beyond what is called Aristotle’s maximal list of the —ten— categories, to which some interpreters, like Kant, add the five postpraedicabilia added by Aristotle in the last chapters of his *Categories*, thus attributing fifteen categories to him).<sup>42</sup> In that case, however, one has to be clear about introducing a very different understanding of ontological categories and of what a category generally speaking is. One would no longer mean by “categories” the highest genera of being which are no species or species-like subdivisions of other genera but would, for example, call categories any general essence of great impact even if it can in some sense be classified as a class of higher universals. Its investigation into irreducible *urphenomena* of such archetypical and irreducible essences as that of personhood or of color may make a phenomenologist refuse to classify such central irreducible data as persons, as a simple subdivision of substances or “color” a simple subdivision of quality, but would see their irreducibility to any other essence, together with their fundamental importance, as sufficient ground of reckoning them among the categories.

Therefore in a perfectly legitimate, though looser application of the term, we may speak of “categories” of importance, categories of free acts, categories of love, etc.; but in these and similar cases the term “category” simply means a broad and general type of something else, not the highest kind but a sub-division of a given act or of a class of being, of the good (value), or a general viewpoint of human motivation. In such application, the term “category” does not mean one of the *most universal and highest classes or genera of being*, which

---

42. R. ROVIRA, *¿Una lista desordenada y defectuosa?* cit., 258 ff. offers convincing arguments why they should not be considered as “added categories” and why doing so results from a fundamental error and misunderstanding.



are never species of higher ones, as the ontological categories in the strict sense do.

Besides excluding transcendentals, first principles, and modes of being from the ontological categories, we therefore likewise have to exclude from their scope the many more specific essences including those that, unlike genera and species of animals, are of greatest interest for metaphysics when it asks its central question “what is being in the most proper sense?”, such as: person, community, soul, each of which, however, constitutes a kind, however important, of higher kinds or different natures, wherefore they are not categories in the strictest sense of the term: that of highest genera which are not species or subdivisions of higher (more abstract) genera.

*B. No individuals including a single and supremely individual divine being are ontological categories.* This directs our attention to another aspect and limit of the categories: being the highest *kinds* of being, they have the character of *genera* in contradistinction to individuals. For this reason, no essence of which there can only be just one (as in the case of God) and no single individual being is a category. Neither God, monotheistically understood, nor Peter nor Socrates, are categories, however rich their essences are, because they differ precisely from an essential feature of categories, their character of highest and universal genera of being.

One could argue, for example with Chisholm, that, even if not individuals and individual persons per se, the general term or datum of “individual” (individualness) and person(hood), is a category, yet even this assumption is doubtful because one might argue that, also taken generally, syncategorical expressions such as “this individual” do not designate any *kind* of being, just as the term “person” does not mean a sort of thing (it is not a “*sortaler Begriff*”) but individuals.<sup>43</sup> At any rate, even if one disagrees with this view and claims, as I would, that also the terms “individualness” and “personhood” include elements of universal essences of personhood and individuality, certainly the individual person, and in a less important sense,

---

43. See R. SPAEMANN, *Personen. Versuche über den Unterschied zwischen ‘etwas’ und ‘jemand’* (Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1996).

any individual being as such is always unique and, in different degrees, unrepeatable, and therefore individuals and persons are not a genus of being and hence no category.<sup>44</sup>

Linked to this, also being (to be), at least in the real world whose inhabitants are always and only individuals, is a most individual level of being that falls outside the categories. Existence as well as essence have been called by medieval philosophers (transcendental) “principles of being”, instead of categories; because they are constitutive elements of each real being rather than “kinds” of being. To exist is therefore, quite apart from the reason of its individual thisness, not a category. The *actus essendi* differs sharply from all categories that refer to *kinds of things*, and therefore seem to pertain principally or always to the order of *essence*, and not to existence (to the *act of being*) which precisely differs from all finite essences.

We intentionally used the term “seem to pertain to the level of essence”, because a claim that categories would exclusively relate to essences has to be disputed. It is false to claim that categories always belong to the order of essences. Instead, at closer consideration we see that categories are related neither to pure *esse* nor to pure *essence*, but instead to the domain of *entia* (*beings*): categories then are the most universal genera of *entia*, *of that which is (id quod est) and has an essence*.

Because of all the data that we must distinguish from categories and that yet clearly fall within the domain of ontology and metaphysics, we cannot agree with the thesis of Jorge Gracia that metaphysics, in its entirety, is the science of categories.<sup>45</sup>

## II. A DEFINITIVE LIST OF ONTOLOGICAL CATEGORIES – A DISTANT GOAL OF FUTURE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH

### 1. *Is Anything Wrong with, or Missing in, Aristotle’s Maximal List of Ten Categories?*

If we want to determine a definitive list of the ontological categories as the highest genera of being and wish to find out what these con-

---

44. See J. E. GRACIA, *Individuality* cit.

45. See J. SEIFERT, *What is Metaphysics and What Its Tasks?* cit., 21-45.

cretely are, we may say, without providing a thorough analysis, that Aristotle's minimal list of categories that recognizes only two ontological categories, two highest genera of being, namely substance and accidents, identifies two highest kinds of being which are most certainly and evidently in no way sub-divisions of higher genera: (1) that which is "in something else" (accidents) and (2) that which is "not in something else" but in itself (substance). In this regard, this distinction is the simplest, most unambiguous, undoubtedly true and rigorous answer to the number of categories of being. Aristotle instead assumes that the most basic classes and highest genera of accidents, of which he numbers nine, are categories on their own; as a matter of fact: he does not reckon "accidents" as categories but only the highest genera of them. Aristotle's maximal list of ten categories does not count "accidents" in general as a category but regards their different kinds as so important that not "accidents" as such, but much rather their fundamental kinds constitute categories, i.e., the highest genera of being. Aristotle thus identifies ten most general genera of being —substance and nine categories of accidents:<sup>46</sup>

1. Substance
2. Quantity
3. Quality
4. Relation
5. Somewhere (location)
6. When (time)
7. Being in a position.
8. Having
9. Acting (action); doing;
10. Passion (being acted upon).<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding its clarity and apparent completeness, Aristotle's list of categories seems to entail a number of problems and omissions. If one is willing to follow Aristotle's list, one runs into vari-

---

46. Aristotle himself provided different lists of categories. See ARISTOTLE, *Categories* cit., 3-24. R. GROSSMANN, *op. cit.*, who gives an entirely different list, defends the view that a list of categories must be complete.

47. ARISTOTLE, *Categories* cit., 1b25-2a4.

ous difficulties in establishing the number and concrete identity of categories:

1. This maximal list leaves first the difficult question what then “accidents as such” are, if they are not a supreme genus of being. How can the single accident-categories Aristotle names be the “highest genera of being” which by definition cannot have a higher genus above them, but in fact do have such a higher and more universal genus of being above them, namely that of “accidents”? A deeper philosophical investigation than we can provide here would be necessary to answer this question.

2. If one poses the question of the list of categories not only with respect to sensible reality but also in relation to spiritual real beings, it emerges that some of the Aristotelian categories (for example “where”) do not apply, which was part of the cause for the sharp critique of the Aristotelian list categories Plotinus made of them in his *Enneads*, VI, 1-3.<sup>48</sup> The question whether Porphyrius’s attempt to achieve a reconciliation between Plotinus and Aristotle in his *Isagoge* succeeded would need deep further philosophical investigations.

3. Aristotle fails to distinguish between three kinds of categories; a) those that apply to material beings only (for example where), b) those which apply to temporal (including spiritual) things only (when), and c) those which apply to all beings, material and spiritual beings alike (for example substance, quality), which pose the new problem keenly observed by Plotinus, how we can use the same terms to designate the categories of the physical and of the spiritual world? This problem, and an absence of a clear concept of analogy, prompted him to offer two lists of categories, one for the sensible world, another one for the spiritual intelligible world.

4. Linked to this, Aristotle fails to discuss the question which of the categories only apply to innerworldly and limited beings, such as “where” and “when” and which constitute “*pure perfections*” that are absolutely better to possess than to lack and therefore apply also to the absolute, divine being, and admit of infinity (which Aristotle denied of God), such as substance.

---

48. See PLOTINUS, *Enneadi* cit., 1410-1619.

5. A fifth reason for the incompleteness of the Aristotelian list of categories consists in that he likewise ignores the question in which ways the categories also exist and undergo differentiations in the four modes of being that we have distinguished from the modality of the real world. Plotinus<sup>49</sup> asks this question about the intelligible world of the Platonic Ideas and pure Spirits and comes up with the solution that in the intelligible world all (or at least some) of the categories that apply to the sensible world have to be eliminated and five other ones introduced. But while this is an important question and critical thought on Aristotle's list of categories, we ought to amplify Plotinus's question and ask how the categories also apply (apart from the real world) also to possible worlds, to purely intentional objects, and to the being of purely logical entities and meaning-units or to possible worlds. It should be clear that any attempt to answer all of these questions in this short essay would be futile.

## *2. Have Later Philosophers Discovered New Categories not Considered by Aristotle?*

In a number of later and contemporary discussions, especially since Meinong and Husserl, R. Grossmann, and many others, additional highest genera of being (categories) have been proposed that cannot be subsumed under Aristotle's ten categories, such as "state of affairs", fact, process, whole, and set.<sup>50</sup>

Let us pick out just some of these and pose a few questions regarding them, inviting new research into categories to find more complete answers. Without being able here to offer an in-depth study of these alternative lists of categories, various questions pose themselves:

a. Is "state of affairs" (the being-[or not-being]-a-of-a-B") not an ontic formation of the transcendental realm rather than a cat-

---

49. PLOTINUS, *Plotinus Schriften* (39-45). Band IVa. Text und Übersetzung. Übers. Richard Harder (Felix Meiner, Hamburg, 1967), 97-305.

50. Reinhardt Grossmann holds that a complete list of categories includes "substance, fact, property, process, whole, set" adding five categories to Aristotle's list. R. GROSSMANN, *op. cit.*, xvi.

egory, because it is found with respect to all beings, all categories, and all modes of being, and even regarding nothingness? Therefore it seems to be prior to the highest kinds of being and to belong — like transcendental being, properties, and principles— to an ontological realm prior to categories? I am strongly inclined to answer this question in the affirmative.<sup>51</sup>

b. Is “fact” just a *real state of affairs* in the real world (*Tatsache*), or something different? If it is just a real state of affairs, one could indeed subsume it on the one hand under the more general datum of the odd transcendental: “states of affairs” (odd, because states of affairs are not properties of beings but an ontic formation *sui generis* related to all beings). On the other hand, since it is a well-defined and clear ontological structure, and differs as real “state of affairs” (fact) from ideal and other states of affairs, one may consider facts (real states of affairs) as one of the highest genera of real being, and as a kind of being that is irreducible to the other categories, and hence as a new category that ought to be added to Aristotle’s list. Also this question I recommend for future studies to the community of researchers into the topic of categories.

c. Is “process”, for example growth, or an event (for example the breaking out of World War I) a new highest kind of beings and hence a new category, or is it only a combination of the Aristotelian categories action and passion? If it is the latter, it would be an unnecessary multiplication of categories to call process and event an eleventh or twelfth category; if the former, it might well qualify as a category of its own. “Process” is no doubt similar to Kant’ third category (allegedly based on the so-called relation of the —disjunctive— judgment): “Of Community (reciprocity between the agent and patient)”. Kant interprets this category in a way that fits rather well processes as some relation between action and passion. Also this question cannot be answered easily.

Kant’s twelve categories cannot be discussed here in detail. Yet his list seems to merge categories with modes of being, as well as on-

---

51. For this and other reasons, such as that states of affairs cannot be “bearers of substances”, I find the claim of J. CUMPA, *Categoriality* cit., 19 untenable, when he writes: “States of affairs are, then, the floor of the theory of categories, and being a constituent, the bearer of categories”.

tological with logical categories. Moreover, they are quite artificially derived from the quantities, qualities, modalities and relations of the judgment. Such a derivation of ontological categories from the four divisions of judgments is artificial because, as Alexander Pfänder has shown in his *Logik*,<sup>52</sup> the logical phenomena of quantity, quality, modality, and relation not only differ sharply from the ontological categories Kant seeks to derive from them, but make such a derivation wholly untenable. Besides, Kant reinterprets the ontological categories in a completely different subjective sense that deprives them from their authentic ontological sense and turns them into mere subjective forms of thought applicable to appearances only. Moreover, Kant's list includes, besides highest kinds of being, other and more abstract properties and modalities of being such as reality, possibility, and necessity, which can hardly be called "genera of being". As previously noted, this and other lists of ontological categories are frequently assembled without a clear ontological and methodological foundation. Frequently, philosophers do not look for the same thing that Aristotle and we are looking for: namely for the highest genera of being, i.e., for what we understand ontological categories to be.

### *3. Reflections on the Missing of Any Axiological Categories in Aristotle's and Other Lists of Categories:*

#### *On the Need to Include Value Categories among Ontological Categories and on the Three Dimensions of Being*

There is another very crucial lacuna in almost all lists of categories. Two ways in particular lead us to recognize this: a reflection on the transcendentals and pure perfections and another one on the deepest dimension of being. In the list of transcendental properties of being which we have given above, at least two of seven, perhaps even three, are value properties characteristic in one way or another for all beings: the *bonum* (the good), the *pulchrum* (the beautiful), and the *verum* (the true or intelligible). Now not only do they in some

---

52. A. PFÄNDER, *Logik* cit.

way represent three different categories (highest genera) of values but they allow for many further subdivisions and categories. In most lists only the most basic genera of the transcendental *ens* (being, entity) as well as of the transcendental *res* (essence) are the basis for the identification of the highest genera of being. But why only them? Why not include also the highest genera of goodness (for example ontological values, intellectual values, vital values, aesthetic values, and moral values as well as the value of truth and intelligibility of being) among the categories?

Certainly, values and goodness are *sui generis* and somehow “consequential properties” that proceed from other characteristics of beings. This might have prevented philosophers from reckoning their supreme kinds among the categories of being. However, if the Good, as Plato maintained in the *Politeia*,<sup>53</sup> holds the supreme place in being, should not the fundamental highest kinds of the good and of value also figure in the list of categories? If some value is found in *all beings* and is thus crucial to understand being itself properly, it seems logical to expect that the most basic kinds of goodness and of values likewise constitute highest genera of being, or at least are so essential for being that the different categories of value should be listed among the list of categories. The categories of importance, of motivation, of values, etc., as well as the highest value kinds that tradition has kept out of the realm of ontological categories, could be held to constitute a further sphere of purely ontological (value-)categories neglected in the Aristotelian and most other philosophies of categories.<sup>54</sup>

---

53. PLATO, *Republic* Books VI and VII. See J. SEIFERT, *The Idea of the Good as the Sum-total of Pure Perfections. A New Personalistic Reading of Republic VI and VII*, in G. REALE and S. SCOLNIKOV (eds.), *New Images of Plato. Dialogues on the Idea of the Good* (Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin, 2002) 407-424.

54. On the most fundamental differentiation between different categories of importance as categories of human motivation and as objective ontological categories (*Seinsproprietäten*) cf. D. VON HILDEBRAND, *Ethics*. 2nd ed. (Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1978), ch. 3-7. See also J. SEIFERT, *Die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von 'Sein' - Dietrich von Hildebrand als Metaphysiker und Martin Heideggers Vorwurf der Seinsvergessenheit*, in B. SCHWARZ (ed.) *Wahrheit, Wert und Sein. Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Habel, Regensburg, 1970) 301-332.



Another way to arrive at the same result is the consideration that the gradation and hierarchy of being can be considered from the point of view of three dimensions or directions in which being is opposed to nothingness: through the degree of its 1. reality, 2. its intelligibility, and 3. its value. And of these three value and the good (that gives justification of being and makes an entity something that not merely is but ought to be and is confirmed in its being) is the deepest. Now we ask: Should the most fundamental and deepest dimension of being, its value, its being good that it is, be simply forgotten when one composes a list of ontological categories? It could thus be argued that different highest kinds of value constitute ontological categories. Similarly, the fundamental genera of the *verum*, understood as intelligibility<sup>55</sup>, should also give rise to a basic categorization of degrees of intelligibility and lead to a list of ontological categories of intelligibility. I cannot dwell on this within the limits of the present essay any longer.

#### 4. Linguistic and Other Categories

From all of these categories we must distinguish the different categories of words and linguistic simple elements.<sup>56</sup> Linguistic categories such as nouns, verbs, sentences, etc. do not regard and differentiate different categories on the level of their *meanings*, which would constitute an extra-linguistic logical level, but *as words*, where of course, not merely the word-sounds but also the grammatical laws and indirectly the meanings of the concepts expressed in linguistic words and sentences determine the different linguistic categories, which we cannot investigate here at length.

---

55. It can as well be understood as value of being. See J. SEIFERT, *Wahrheit und Person* cit., ch. 1, on the different senses of ontological truth, among which also value figures prominently.

56. Such simple uncomposed words that can be subjects or predicates of sentences are the starting point of Aristotle's *Categories*. However, he goes immediately beyond the linguistic level to the meanings of these words, and, further, to the objects meant by such "uncomposed words" and analyzes not only their meanings and the logical categories but also the ontological categories meant by them. See ARISTOTLE, *The Categories* cit., 1b25-2a4.

In all of these cases, however, when used rigorously, the term category refers to the highest (most basic) different genera within each of these phenomena. A further investigation into ontological categories we must leave to the future work of a large group of philosophical researchers and to future investigations of my own, having concentrated in the present essay chiefly on ontological categories and having taken other categories into consideration only to the extent to which their inclusion in, or their delineation from, ontological categories helped us to understand ontological categories more deeply.